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ISSUE #21 CREDITS

Written by: MIKE COSTA

Art by: GUIDO GUIDI

and BRENDAN CAHILL

Colors by: JOANA LAFUENTE

Letters by: SHAWN LEE

Assistant Editor: CARLOS GUZMAN

Editor: ANDY SCHMIDT

THE TRANSFORMERS

COVER CHECKLIST:



COVER A

ART BY: MARCELO MATHEUS



COVER B

ART BY: GUIDO GUIDI
COLORS BY: JOANA LAFUENTE



COVER RI

ART BY: BRENDAN CAHILL
COLORS BY: FRANCESCA TEATONISANI

STORY SO FAR:

Rodimus left Earth in search of the Matrix of Leadership, recruited in Decepticon base and faced the newly repaired Megatron, who incapacitated him and sacrificed him and the Matrix handling airlessly through space...

Until his crystal-enclosed on a mysterious planet, alive, The Matrix lodged in. His chest, he escaped the grasp of desperate aliens and found Wheelie. They both headed towards Cybertron, where they reunited with Ironhide and Sunstreaker. The reunion was cut short when a surprise attack led Rodimus up a disturbing revelation: Galvatron was back on Cybertron and he had amassed a huge army. The Autobots escaped further attack by taking off and heading back to Earth, intending to warn the other Autobots of the new situation on Cybertron...

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Greg Guckler, Chief Operating Officer
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I'M SORRY,
BUMBLEBEE. WE JUST
DON'T HAVE THE ABILITY
YET TO FABRICATE THE
PARTS YOU NEED FOR A
FULL REPAIR. YOU'RE GOING
TO HAVE TO TAKE IT EASY
ON THAT LEG UNTIL
WHEELJACK CAN FIGURE
OUT A REPLACEMENT
JOINT.

IT'S FINE.



I CAN
STAND. AFTER
SIX WEEKS. DO
YOU KNOW HOW
GOOD IT FEELS
JUST TO BE UP
OFF A TABLE?



HEY,
LOOKIN'
GOOD,
BEE.



Excerpt from file 01000101 Vector Sigma archive: It was said upon that day that no looker for came Hot Rod, shining like a Prime of older days, and gloom went before him. And glittering at his chest shone the Matrix fair almost beyond endurance with power unimaginable. With him also were Sunstreaker, who had been named "betrayor," and Ironhide, who had fallen, and Wheelie, lost almost to the edge of memory.



And Autobots who had seen battles across innumerable stars, and who had beheld events on galactic scales, fell silent in wonder for the confusion upon them was great, but even greater was their awe, and the kindling of hope in a place where hope had guttered.





And Bumblebee was brushed aside as one at once forgotten, and he perceived that his leadership, ever precious was strong upon its final, faying thread.

For the Autobots had too long now been a scattered clan, confounded in grief and unavailed by choices made in desperation.



And Bumblebee wished only for redress for those who had lead down event paths - but his heart did not forbode it, though not jealously did he grieve.



Even Optimus Prime himself could not contend for leadership with one who held the Matrix, nor would he wish to. For Optimus was ensnared in the same ancient doom as the Primes before him, and it was both the source and the perilous cost of his wisdom to abide rules wrought by fatherless hands greater than his.



But Hot Rod humbled himself before Optimus, and made obeisance, and had no claim on the Matrix, but was only ever acting as a steward. Thus were his rough words to Bumblebee revealed not as pride, but as a desire to see his task, so near the end, finally completed.



Hot Rod spoke long and without pause, telling of how he'd come to each of his lost friends, and the peril that he'd faced that even now still threatened their home, and Prime listened.

Through a journey almost impossible, and from the very vales of death, had Hot Rod returned, and the change in him was plain.



And then Optimus pronounced his name "Rodman," and ever was it so, and his former name was never heard again, for that was the name of a smaller figure, short of patience and unmoved by counsel. And it was a great honor whose majesty settled on Rodman's shoulders nearly as handsomely as the Matrix itself, though this was more deserved, and he wore it more proudly.

And the Autobots
were struck with
wonder and delight
with the return of
so many they'd
thought lost.



And strangers
newly met.



And although old wounds
had not fully closed...



...the urge to forgive
overcame all suspicion
and, in that brief hour
at least, all were one.



And then Optimus
Prime approached
And he spoke





RODIMUS HAS COME FROM CYBERTRON. HE HAS FOUND THE PLANET IS HABITABLE AGAIN—THE ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN PROCESSSED, AND THE SWARM ELIMINATED, AND HE HAS ALSO FOUND THAT GALVATRON IS THERE, AND GALVATRON IS RAISING AN ARMY.*

*SEE LAST ISSUE AND TRANSFORMERS: HEART OF DARKNESS #4-6 FOR DETAILS—EDITORIAL



FOR WHAT PURPOSE, WE DON'T KNOW, BUT HE'S BEEN ASSEMBLING IT FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, SLOWLY CAPTURING MORE OF THE PLANET. HE HAS OVERSOWN NEARLY ALL OF IT NOW.

I REFUSE TO HAVE OUR HOME RESTORED ONLY TO BE HOST TO A LUNATIC AND HIS ARMY. I AM GOING TO STOP HIM.



ANY AUTOBOT WHO WISHES TO JOIN ME IS WELCOME.



HOW... HOW WILL WE GET THERE?



WE'LL TAKE WHAT ENERGY WE CAN RATION FROM SKYWATCH'S COFFERS, AND WE'LL USE THE REMAINING CHARGE IN RODIMUS' BATTERY. CHESLA SUPREME HAS AGREED TO SEPARATE HIMSELF TO CARRY US THERE, AND HAVE HIS BASE REMAIN HERE, ON EARTH.

WITH BOTH THE MATRIX AND MEGATRON IN OUR CUSTODY, WE'VE NEVER BEEN A MORE APPEALING TARGET FOR DECEPTION ATTACK. GETTING BOTH OF THEM OFF-WORLD WOULD BE THE WISEST CHOICE REGARDLESS.



THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THIS MISSION WILL BE. THE ONLY INTELLIGENCE WE HAVE IS THAT AN INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS ADVERSARY IS IN COMMAND OF A LARGE HOSTILE FORCE.

WE DON'T KNOW THEIR POSITIONS, THEIR WEAKNESSES, OR WHAT THEIR DEFENSES ARE. UNTIL WE DO, WE WILL BE INCREDIBLY VULNERABLE. AND EVEN AFTER WE'VE ASSESSED THEIR STRENGTH... THIS COULD WELL BE A SUICIDE MISSION.



BUT REGARDLESS OF THE ODDS... CYBERTRON IS HOME. AND I KNOW MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TANGIBLE TO FIGHT FOR. SOME GOAL.

I BELIEVE IN OUR MISSION ON THIS PLANET, BUT OUR PLANET IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR. TOO FOR MYSELF. IT'S WORTH DYING FOR. VOLUNTEERS ASSEMBLE IN THE MAIN FUSELAGE IN FOUR HOURS.



As soon as he began to speak, it had been decided. All of them volunteered.



All save one.



YOU DIDN'T
EVEN BOTHER
CONSULTING
ME.

I WOULD HAVE
DONE THIS WITH OR
WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT.
IF A THREAT LIKE THAT IS
AMASSING, AND IF IT'S
USING OUR HOMEWORLD
AS A STAGING GROUND...
I CAN'T IGNORE
THAT.



I NEVER
HAD A
CHANCE,
DID I?

YOU'RE
NOT BEING USURPED.
THE MATRIX IS A LARGE
RESPONSIBILITY... BUT ALSO
AN OPPORTUNITY. I HAVEN'T
SEEN THE AUTOBOTS FILLED
WITH PURPOSE LIKE THIS IN
YEARS. THIS IS DRAWING US
OUT INTO SPACE WHETHER
YOU INTENDED FOR US
TO STAY OR NOT.



BUT I'M NO
LONGER THE
LEADER, AND I'M
FREE TO FOLLOW
FATE. YOU ARE STILL
BOUND BY YOUR DUTY.
YOU HAVE TO MAKE
THE CHOICE YOU
THINK IS BEST
FOR US ALL.



THAT... SORTA
PUTS ME IN A WEIRD
POSITION. PRIME
SINCE EVERYONE IS
ALREADY FOLLOWING
YOU.

PRIME.



I'VE
GOT WHAT
I NEED.



THERE'S
SOMETHING
ELSE I NEED TO
TELL YOU



And when Bumblebee had
heard all of what Optimus
had to tell him, he was for
a time very still.
And he felt a great distress
that so much had been
hidden for so long, by those
to whom he had given his
allegiance and trust. And he
felt wounded and confined.



And then a great wrath rose
in him like a choking flame,
and took a shape. Rough
hewn, strange yet increasingly
familiar these last months—
the shape was duty. And it
was welcome to behold.



And he knew
exactly what
he had to do.

TELL MAGNUS
HE'S STAYING
HERE WITH ME, AND
I'M GOING TO NEED
A FEW OTHERS
AS WELL.





...THINGS SURE
HAVE GOTTEN
SCREWY AROUND
HERE



YEAH, WELL...
THAT'S WHAT
I'M GOING TO
TRY TO FIX.



I'M NOT
GOING TO ASK
YOU TO STAY, BUT
ARE YOU SURE YOU
DON'T NEED MYSELF
OR ANY OF THE
OTHERS TO COME
WITH YOU?



SPIKE,
YOU'VE PROVED
YOUR BRAVERY
AND YOUR
RESOURCEFULNESS
TO ME MANY
TIMES OVER.


BUT THIS
IS SOMETHING
WE HAVE TO DO
OURSELVES.
I KNOW YOU
UNDERSTAND.



YOU SURE
YOU WANT TO
BRING THAT
THING ALONG
WITH US?

BELIEVE
ME, HE'S VERY
USEFUL OUT
THERE.





And, glimmering like a jewel in the westerling sun and among the dying stars, the larger host of Autobots finally left Earth. Now refugees from two worlds, the longing for home was strong in their hearts. And though they came later to great disaster, and even greater disagement and sanderog, now there was only joy. The great joy of adventure and homecoming and brotherhood.

And many would never return to these strange, green and teeming shores again.

SPACE OPERA—FINAL TABLEAUX: ORPHANS OF THE HELIX

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!



POLICE ACTION: PROLOGUE






I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO WANTS TO TALK TO YOU. THE ONLY ONE WHO CARES WHAT YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY IS. I LISTEN. I WANT TO HELP.

ISN'T THAT WHAT FRIENDS DO?



APPEALING TO ME IN FRIENDSHIP? PLEASE.

PROWL:
I KNOW YOU ARE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THIS WON'T WORK.



THAT'S PROBABLY TRUE. YOU'RE NOT VULNERABLE AND YOU'RE NOT SCARED AND THERE'S NOTHING I HAVE TO OFFER YOU THAT YOU NEED.

BUT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO HEAR ANYWAY.



YES? AND WHY WOULD I DO THAT, PROWL? I HATE YOU.

EXACTLY.



AND YOU HAVE DAMAGING INFORMATION THAT COULD UPEND MY ENTIRE MISSION HERE. AND YOU LOVE TO SUGAT.

HE SPILLS. IT'S NOTHING NEW, BUT IT'S GOOD TO HEAR IT AGAIN.

PRIME.

I'VE GOT WHAT I NEED.

THAT'S WHEN PRIME FILLED IN THE TEE. HE TOOK IT BETTER THAN I EXPECTED. SMART QUESTIONS, NO WHINING, FOCUSED THE ANGER.

HE'S GOING TO BE A GREAT LEADER ONE DAY, IF HE GETS THE CHANCE.

LEADER'S A TOUGH JOB. TO LAUGH IN THEIR FACE IF THEY OFFERED IT, LOTS OF EXPOSURE, LOTS OF PEOPLE ASKING QUESTIONS, LOTS OF COMPROMISES.

COMPROMISES ARE TROUBLESOME, EXPEDIENT, BUT IMPERFECT. COMPROMISES WILL RUN US.

I DEAL IN FACTS. I FOLLOW THEM WHERE THEY LEAD. I REDUCE THEIR EXISTENCE. I CALCULATE THEIR RAMIFICATIONS.

COMPROMISES ARE BORN OF FACTS, AN ALCHEMICAL SYNTHESIS. THAT DOESN'T INTEREST ME. I DON'T MANUFACTURE REALITY. I WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ITS PASSING, AND I HUNT IT.



I HUNT IT TO THE LAST.

HEY, WHOA, WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?

ARE YOU KIDDING?

YEAH, THAT'S ME, I'M A BIG KIDDER.

I'M LEAVING.

NO, YOU'RE NOT.

WHAT? DID YOU EXPECT ME TO BLAST OFF WITH ALL OF YOU BUFFOONS TO MAKE SOME LAST STAND ON CYBERTRON?

IF YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT I WAS THAT SENTIMENTAL, YOU ARE NOT AS SMART AS I'VE HEARD.

I'D PREFER YOU STAY HERE.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT MUST BE UNBEARABLE.

I THANKED RATCHET AND WHEELJACK FOR THE REPAIRS, BUT YOU HAVE NO REASON TO HOLD ME.

AND NO ABILITY, EITHER.



I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.

NOT IF YOU WANT TO STAY FUNCTIONAL.



RIGHT NOW WE ARE NOT ENEMIES, PROM. BE AS SMART AS THEY SAY YOU ARE. DON'T PROVOKE ME.



NEWSFLASH: THERE ARE DOZENS OF WAYS THAT CAN BECOME A PROBLEM LATER.



YOU ARE DEFINITELY INVOLVED.



CONTINUED IN
TRANSFORMERS #251

CHAOS HAS ARRIVED!

Starting with this issue, the TRANSFORMERS: CHAOS event kicks off. Now that might seem a little strange considering that this issue had two stories in it. The first story is continued next issue as guest writer, and CHAOS co-architect, James Roberts comes on board for two special issues that take us back to the early days of Cybertron—and the early days of Optimus Prime and Megatron's relationship. Heck, we're even going to touch on aspects set up way back in MEGATRON: ORIGIN, if you've been around that long.

That's issues #22 and #23. With issue #24, CHAOS part 1 begins the battle for Cybertron! CHAOS will run in the even-numbered issues of TRANSFORMERS, while starting with issue #25 and running in the odd-numbered issues is "The Last Story on Earth." That picks up from the second story in this issue.

Okay, that all seems confusing, doesn't it? But it's all part of CHAOS. There is a checklist in this very issue that should help you keep easy track.

And we're running CHAOS from this issue (#21) all the way to issue #125. Yes, you read that correctly, #125. What this really means is it runs from #21 through what would be #32. That's a lot of issues, but with so much going on, and so much excitement in this storyline, we're double-skippping TRANSFORMERS until the end of the year! That's two issues every month! Starting right now! So come back to your shop in two weeks to pick up the next issue!

I'll come back to #125 in a minute. First, I'd like to talk a little bit about what CHAOS is and how it came about. And its inception can be traced back pretty far. When I was tasked with editing the TRANSFORMERS line of comics, it was immediately clear that the core fanbase was fragmented. There were (and are) many continuity errors—or things flat-out ignored, and lack of character consistency. Some of this had legitimate merit. Other parts didn't. But it's all very tricky. I wanted to clean that up, but I also knew we had to drive the bus forward.

So the first order of business was to launch an ongoing series with its own premise, its own hook. We did that with Mike Costa and Don Figueroa at the helm. Mike had a roughly two-year plan. And CHAOS is the end of that initial plan. This is where Mike and Don's stories really bear their fruit.

The second order of business was getting some sort of sense of cohesion to the TRANSFORMERS comic book universe. And so we started the ongoing series focused on Earth. We let the characters in space sit, for the most part. We gave them time to move around and adjust. And it was during all of this time that Galvatron was out there, making moves, and no one on Earth was any the

wiser. What this allowed us to do is simple. It allowed us to pick up threads from the previous arc to the ongoing. We set off directly from the events of ALL HAIL MEGATRON and recently used the miniseries INFESTATION: TRANSFORMERS and now HEART OF DARKNESS to begin to cast our ropes further back in the timeline. We're picking up on Simon Furman's Dead Universe saga. And next issue, we touch on MEGATRON: ORIGIN territory.

We're hoping that the effect of all of this is a more unified universe. Not every continuity paradox will be addressed in the course of CHAOS. It's not built to do that, nor should it. What it does do is get all the characters on the same page, there's a big threat to fight. It wraps up a few loose ends and storylines. And it hopefully will give us a firm sense that all the TRANSFORMERS comics you've read over the last five years are full of merit. That all versions or eras, or whatever you want to call them, have contributed to what the current TRANSFORMERS comic is.

We couldn't be telling the CHAOS story without the work of writers Simon Furman, Eric Holmes, Nick Roche, Shane McCarthy, Zander Cannon, James Roberts, Dan Abnett, Andy Lennox, and Mike Costa. Whether you've loved every story or not, they are all necessary to what CHAOS is and how we got here.

CHAOS is big—it's epic—and it will have lasting effects on the TRANSFORMERS universe. But what I love most about it is that for the first time since I've been editing TRANSFORMERS, I feel like it's firing on all cylinders. The past TRANSFORMERS comics are providing firepower to make these issues take off even farther. In other words, this is what we've been driving towards since my first day as editor on these books—and it only gets better from here!

Now, back to #125... This will be our final issue of 2011. And it is something you cannot possibly predict. But it is a game-changer in and of itself. Right now, I can tell you this much: the creative team is ENCRYPTED. The story is ENCRYPTED. And it's #125 and not #32 because of ENCRYPTED. Okay, well, I guess I can't tell you that much as my computer brain keeps putting "ENCRYPTED" over everything I try to type. You'll just have to trust me—issue #125 is going to blow you away! But only AFTER you're already blown away by our biweekly awesome epic known as CHAOS!

Thanks for reading.

Andy Schmidt
Transformers Editor
May 2011

Scanned by
Shifty-Eyed
Goat

GREENGIRL
EDIT

